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ABSTRACT

Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics show a 183% increase in female juvenile prostitution and a 245% increase in male juvenile prostitution between the years 1969 and 1978. Most of these juveniles were runaways who shared a common childhood background of physical and sexual abuse. In 1981, a city task force was created to examine the problem of an estimated 300 street youths in Portland, Oregon. As a result of task force efforts, Project LUCK (Link Up the Community for Kids) was formed as an administrative organization designed to coordinate and combine the efforts of 34 youth-serving agencies of which 15 were actively involved. The goals of Project LUCK are public education and direct service. The focus of public education is to show that juvenile prostitution is child abuse. Services take the form of emergency help to street youths and longer term services focusing on helping the youth make a successful transition from the streets. Services provided to street youth include: (1) a shelter for runaways; (2) counseling services; (3) a Youth Advocate Program; (4) vocational training and employment placement; (5) a support group for teenage mothers; (6) a walk-in emergency counseling center; and (7) street outreach. Portland's multi-agency approach and the degree of coordination of agencies are two of the greatest strengths of the city's services for street youth. (NB)

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Street Kids:
Children in Danger

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Summary

F.B.I. statistics show a large increase (183%) in female juvenile prostitution and an even more alarming increase (245%) in male juvenile prostitution. Most are runaways and share a common childhood background of physical and sexual abuse. An assessment is made of the needs of the estimated 300 street youth in Portland and of the minimal services required for their protection.

Street Kids: Children in Danger

James W. Beatty and Helena M. Carlson, Ph.D.

Juvenile prostitution is a means of survival for an increasing number of youth in both large metropolitan areas and many smaller communities. FBI statistics show a 183.3% increase in female juvenile prostitution and an even more alarming 244.9% increase for male prostitutes between the years 1969 and 1978. The risks that these kids incur as a result of this lifestyle are several. Juvenile prostitution is often associated with other criminal behavior such as larceny and drug dealing and abuse. Involvement in the juvenile justice system labels youth as delinquent and may contribute to involvement in more serious crime. Furthermore, there are inherent physical and psychological dangers in prostituting on the street. Finally, adolescent prostitutes normally are unable to acquire the needed social, educational and occupational skills for success in legitimate ways thus forcing a commitment to deviant lifestyles.

Research indicates that male homosexual prostitution is likely to be as common as female heterosexual prostitution (Caukins and Coombs, 1967), which means there are between 300,000 and 600,000 male prostitutes nationwide (FBI Crime Reports, 1979). The focus of this paper will be teenage

male prostitutes as this population is so often ignored both by the community and until recently by researchers and the social services. The relevant research will be examined and then services for this group in the Portland area will be discussed. Juvenile female prostitutes will be studied only to the extent that the research and social services coincide for the two populations and for some comparisons and contrasts in the two populations.

Who are these youths? Where do they come from and why are they living on the streets? Researchers disagree as to the average age of these kids; James (1980) found an average age of 16.2 years in her sample of Seattle area male prostitutes, while another study stated that the age range for San Francisco hustlers (as they are generally referred to in the gay community and by the kids themselves) was 16 to 23 (Marotta, et al., 1982). Some report a much lower age range such as Holmes, et al. (1980) whose study of 190 kids in Jefferson County, Kentucky showed a range of ages from 11 to 16 years. This disparity may be a result of differences in geographic area and in research methods.

The majority of these boys are lower socio-economic class whites, although minority groups, particularly blacks, may be over-represented in this group relative to the

proportion in the general population (James, 1980). The most common experiences in their backgrounds were physical and sexual abuse and runaway status. Incidence of sexual abuse ranged from a low of 50% in Holmes, et al. (1980) to a high of 83% (James, 1980). Early sexual experience, particularly traumatic abuse like rape and incest were seen as significant common factors for juvenile prostitutes, both male and female, by Choisy (1961), Carns (1973), N. Davis (1971), Maerov (1965), Kemp (1936), and James (1978). Runaways comprise anywhere from 77% (Marotta, et al., 1982) to 90% according to Holmes, et al. (1980).

An issue which is only now being raised in the research is that of sexual preference. Earlier studies did not even consider this question. Weisberg, in testimony presented to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice (1982) stated that a significant and increasing number of these youths are gay-identified.

James (1980) found that of 46 male hustlers 70% identified themselves as gay or bisexual. Marotta, et al. (1982) uncovered similar results in a study of 79 male prostitutes; 77% identified as sexual minority youth with 57% gay and another 20% bisexual. A significant factor which has not been touched upon in any other research was revealed in this study. Of the kids who had originally been runaways (77% of

sample) 31% had left home because of conflicts with parents over the youths sexual preference, a higher percentage than the 19% who listed abuse as a reason for leaving home. However these results may be higher than would be found nationally since the study focuses on the San Francisco area which has long been a haven for gay youth. Further research on this particular issue is definitely indicated as it impacts directly on a number of services including runaway and family services.

A major difference between the street lives of male and female teenage prostitutes (and adult prostitutes, as well) is the lack of a pimp in the vast majority of cases for male prostitutes while the reverse is true for female prostitutes. Most adolescent male prostitutes are independent street hustlers making contact with their customers by loitering in particular areas in the downtown sex trade zones. A few work as independent call boys and a very few work for organized rings such as "escort services." (Edmund White in States of Desire, 1980).

The reasons for initial and continued involvement in prostitution are similar for males and females with the exception of the lack of a pimp or other coercive person and the added factor of homosexuality for males. Initial involvement may often be mostly a result of economic

necessity with exposure to the profession through peers or solicitation by potential customers a factor in increased likelihood of involvement. As was stated above a large number of prostitutes were originally runaways. The average runaway has enough money for three days expenses (Wooden, 1976 quoted in Brown, 1979). Often unwilling to turn to service agencies or authorities (particularly if the youth has a background of abuse) through distrust or fear of being returned home or punished, the adolescent runaway quickly finds himself or herself trying to survive on the streets. Girls become easy targets for pimps. For the male, knowledge of prostitution as an alternative or solicitation are major factors for entrance into prostitution. James (1980) found a high correlation with 72% of the kids reporting solicitation prior to involvement in prostitution.

Poor family relationships were identified as a further factor in the entrance to juvenile prostitution. Tense family relationships, broken homes, neglect and abuse often characterize the backgrounds of these kids (Gray, 1973; Brown, 1979; James, 1976; James, 1980; Holmes, et al., (1980).

Poor self-image and sex-role conflict are mentioned in nearly all studies of the population (Baizerman, et al., 1979; Gandy & Deisher, 1970; James, 1980). Several researchers see a strong correlation between negative sexual experience

and loss of self-esteem and later involvement in sexually deviant lifestyles (Coombs, 1974; James & Meyerding, 1977; Boyer & James, 1982). Sex-role conflict in male prostitutes is an ongoing problem for those who consider themselves heterosexual yet engage in homosexual behavior with their customers (Marotta, et al., 1982).

Factors which make it difficult for the teenage prostitute to exit from the street include low self-esteem, continued economic needs aggravated by poor education and employability. Failure of these kids to exit from street life generally means increased criminal behavior and drug or alcohol abuse (James, 1980).

Only one study, Holmes, et al. (1980) compiled a profile of customers of the juvenile male prostitutes. According to this study, the average customer is a white male, age 40 to 60 years, upper income, college educated professional, and married or divorced with two to four children. Universality of this data which was compiled in Jefferson County, Kentucky is probably not high and further studies are needed. Marotta, et al. (1982) states that most customers are men exploring their homosexual identities.

Community Services

In the past, juvenile prostitution has been dealt with by the police, with no services organized specifically for

these kids and traditional agencies ineffective in meeting the needs of these kids. Many cities, if not most, still rely heavily on law enforcement to deal with teenage prostitutes, despite the fact that most law enforcement officials concur with social workers that these efforts are mostly ineffective in meeting these kids' needs or deterring them from further prostitution. Many of these youth simply never come in contact with law enforcement agencies (Weisberg, 1982).

In organizing services for any target population one should first assess what the actual needs of the given population are. In the case of adolescent prostitutes no formal needs assessments were found. While there appears to be a high degree of concurrence among agency officials, social workers and scientists, and among the kids themselves, there should be an effort to conduct a more considered assessment which as a major part of its content would directly survey the consumers of these services - the juvenile prostitute population.

Portland, unlike the majority of cities, has several community agencies specifically geared to serve this population. In 1981, a task force was created to examine the problem of street youth in Portland. Police estimates place the number of kids at between 200 and 300, though

there may be a considerable discrepancy between these estimates and the actual numbers due to the mobility of the population, fluctuation according to weather and police "heat." The vast majority of male prostitutes are in the downtown area and frequent an area known as "Camp" centered around S. W. Fourth & Yamhill.

Project LUCK

As a result of the city task force, Project LUCK (Link Up the Community for Kids) was formed with start up money from a one-time Health, Education and Welfare grant of \$225,000 and an additional \$200,000 from the community. Project LUCK is an administrative organization to coordinate and combine the efforts of thirty-four youth serving agencies of which fifteen are actively involved. LUCK's coordinating agency is the Tri-County Youth Services Consortium and is administrated through the Metropolitan Service District. The goals of LUCK are public education and direct service. The primary focus of public education is to show that juvenile prostitution is child abuse. Service to the kids divides itself into two categories: Emergency Services and Longer Term Services. Longer Term Services are focused on helping the youth make a successful transition from the streets.

To receive services other than the emergency services provided by a Project LUCK contract agency, Outside/In, a

youth must be authorized by LUCK's case management team. To receive this authorization the youth must make a commitment to leave the street. While this transition is not expected to be immediate and completely successful, the youth must show through effort and actual change that he is serious about leaving the street.

Harry's Mother

Services for transition youth include long-term shelter care provided by contract to Janis Youth Programs which oversees Harry's Mother, a shelter for runaways. These are volunteer foster homes providing a minimum of 90 days shelter and often much longer. Unfortunately, only fifteen spaces are available.

Counseling Services

Ongoing counseling is provided by counselors throughout the community agency network. These are counselors who have been trained by LUCK's Training of Trainers program in the special counseling needs of the street kid. Individual, group, and family counseling is done. LUCK also trains Children's Services Division personnel in serving these youth.

Youth Advocate Program

One other major service is provided to transition youth. This is the Youth Advocate Program (formerly known as the Big Sister/Big Brother program) which is administered by

the YMCA Outer East Youth Service Center. The goal of this program is to encourage a trusting relationship between one youth and a non-exploitive adult with whom he or she is matched. Volunteers donate their time to a LUCK kid to act as a friend, role-model, and an advocate in dealing with many of the bureaucratic and legal problems which these kids often don't know how to deal with. This is one of LUCK's most used transition programs.

Other Services

Vocational training, employment placement, and readiness/assistance are offered by the Tri-County Area CETA Youth Programs which has 25 rapid access slots for LUCK referred kids. A support group for teenage mothers called Young Moms offers support to street kids with kids of their own. Referrals are also made to drug and alcohol abuse programs, although these are not programs specifically oriented to the needs of the street youth. These services have not been greatly used and it remains to be seen how well they respond to this population. Some recreational activities are also provided for the transition group.

While all of Project LUCK's transition services are responsive to the needs of the juvenile prostitute population, the number of youth actually making use of these services is quite small; a total of twelve clients were involved in the longer-term services from the beginning of the

program in March of 1983 through the end of 1983. Still this number does not consider the more heavily used emergency services nor the number of youth who were not accepted by Project LUCK but were referred to other agencies, and it must be noted that a brand new agency will not be fully utilized for some time after starting up. Some consideration should be given to how these services could be presented to a larger number of youth. It may be that LUCK's insistence on a commitment to leaving the streets is cutting some youth off from services which would be beneficial to them.

Outside/In

The other half of Project LUCK's services, emergency services, are provided by Outside/In, a walk-in counseling center. Outside/In provides services to many groups who would not otherwise have access to them. Its stated philosophy is that everyone has a right to physical and mental health. The emergency services provided include emergency short term shelter which is paid for by a voucher system funded by the Northwest Pilot Project, a city program to provide emergency shelter to battered women, the disabled, youth and couples with children on a priority basis. Girls are housed at the YWCA and boys in some of the low-rent downtown hotels. Housing is normally limited to one week except under special circumstances. Medical care for the kids is provided through Outside/In's medical clinic which

is funded by the United Way. Crisis counseling for the kids is done here while on-going counseling is referred to LUCK's case management team. Counseling services are funded by the Multnomah County Mental Health Division. Outside/In also provides information and referrals for these kids.

Street Outreach

Outside/In is also responsible for one of the most important parts of Project LUCK: street outreach. Three staff members, a supervisor and two team workers, go out from seven p.m. until ten p.m. and one night a week until midnight, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and alternate Fridays. Two Outreach workers go out together and try to establish contact with the kids in the Camp area to let them know about the services, show them that someone cares, and hopefully over a period of time establish a rapport with each youth. Current plans call for an expansion of areas covered to include Union Avenue, 82nd Avenue, and Ma's Kitchen on Burnside. Union and 82nd are both areas of heavy concentrations of female prostitutes while Ma's Kitchen is a restuarant which has become a popular hang out for male prostitutes and some female prostitutes.

The Gateway Program: Greenhouse

The final agency to be examined is the newest and is independent from Project LUCK. The Gateway program consists

of a walk-in shelter and two short-term overnight shelters which are not yet open. The shelters will provide housing for approximately 20 boys and girls. The walk-in center, called Greenhouse, has been open for less than a month and is located in the heart of the "Camp" area at Fourth & Yamhill. Greenhouse is open to the kids from four to ten p.m. with the first and last hours reserved for individual counseling. An evening meal is provided and clothing is available. Money is also available for transportation home if desired. Services are limited to those under 21 years of age. The funding for Gateway is from a \$20,000 grant from the Oregon Community Foundation to use as start-up money and from private contributions of \$120,000 from a recent fund raiser. The Salvation Army and the Rotary Club have pledged to cosponsor future funding.

Greenhouse has been seeing an average of forty to fifty kids a night. Approximately 70 to 80 percent of these are regulars. Seeing them this often makes it that much easier to establish trusting relationships with these kids. This is one of Greenhouse's primary goals as well as to provide a sanctuary where they can remove themselves from the street.

One of the greatest strengths of Portland's services for street youth is it's multi-agency approach and the degree of coordination of those agencies as this greatly increases

the chance for any particular youth to connect up with the approach and the services he or she needs. Another strength is the street outreach program and the location of the Greenhouse walk-in center as both of these programs has the effect of bringing the service network to the person who needs it instead of waiting for them to come to you, which is something most street kids will not do.

Of the agency people interviewed, the need most often said to be lacking was shelter for males. Hopefully, Gateway's new shelter will help to alleviate this problem. Another need was for a half-way house of some type which could house transition from street and post-transition kids who still need some guidance. A more long term preventative service is clearly needed to help families deal with sexual minority children. Both the research and interviews with agency people indicated that an increasing number of kids, particularly boys, are ending up on the street as a result of conflict with their families over their sexual identity.

A better safety-net of social services is needed nationwide to prevent child abuse, provide services for what has previously been "throw-away" children and to fill in some of the gaps between service programs which serve particular populations which fit particular criteria.

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